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Truth commissions, education and positive peace: an analysis of truth commission final reports (1980 – 2015)

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Abstract

Transitional justice and education both occupy increasingly prominent space on the international peacebuilding agenda, though less is known about the ways they might reinforce one another to contribute towards peace. This paper presents a cross-national analysis of truth commission reports spanning 1980-2015, exploring the range of educational work taken on by one of the most prominent forms of transitional justice. We find that truth commission engagement with education is increasing over time and that truth commissions are incorporating the task of ‘telling the truth about education’ into their work. However, when truth commissions engage with education, they tend to recommend forwards looking reforms, for instance decontextualized human rights and peace education. We argue that this limits the contribution that truth commissions might make towards positive peace by failing to use their backwards looking, truth telling work to insist on transformation in the educational sector.

Keywords: transitional justice, truth commissions, educational reform, conflict, post-conflict, reconstruction, positive/ negative peace, conflict transformation

Introduction

To date, there have been more than 40 truth commissions around the world (Hayner 2011). The image of Archbishop Desmond Tutu, chair of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, resplendent in his flowing robes, is familiar far beyond South Africa and contributes to making truth commissions arguably the most well-known form of transitional justice. In the early 1980s, when the now well-known Argentine National Commission on the Disappeared published its findings, the idea of non-judicial approaches towards accountability and justice after periods of mass human rights abuse was a new one. Three decades on and truth commissions (TCs) have become a "staple of postconflict peacebuilding efforts" (Brahm 2007, 16). They have been employed to uncover and acknowledge human rights abuses committed under repressive and authoritarian regimes, during periods of armed conflict and as part of colonial projects (e.g. the recent Canadian TC exploring the residential schooling of indigenous children). They have collected testimony from victims and perpetrators of human rights abuses (uniquely, in South Africa, perpetrators who testified to the TRC received amnesty for their crimes (Hayner 2011)), and others affected by conflict, including children (in Sierra Leone, Liberia, Timor Leste and Kenya) and members of the diaspora (in Liberia). They have published final reports that have had huge social impact (for instance, in Argentina where a shortened version of TC's *Nunca Mas* became an overnight best-seller), or that have been quickly buried (as in Chile and El Salvador). Their work has informed, to varying degrees and levels of success (e.g. Hayner 2011; Mendelhoff 2004) wider social transition and transformation in societies grappling with the legacies of massive human rights violations.

Truth commissions, with their intentions to “address the past in order to change policies, practices and even relationships in the future, and to do so in a manner that respects and honors those who were affected by the abuses” (Hayner 2011, 11), are inherently and implicitly educational. The degree to which TCs are successful in translating the truth telling about the past that they do into tangible change in the present and future may depend on the success with which they are able to educate about the work that they have done and its implications. Despite this, we have little sense of how TCs have engaged with and included education in their work and to what effect. Scholars have noted the shared objectives and conceptual potential for education and transitional justice more broadly (e.g. Bellino 2017; Cole 2014; Davies 2017 (in this Special Issue), Ramirez-Barat and Duthie 2017; Paulson 2009) and TCs in particular to reinforce one another (e.g. Paulson 2009, 2011a; Oglesby 2007). Some case study research has explored TC engagement with education in particular contexts (e.g., Bellino 2016 and Oglesby 2007 in Guatemala; Paulson 2011b; 2017 in Peru and 2006 in Sierra Leone; and Weldon and Tibbitts 2017 in South Africa (in this Special Issue)), highlighting some limits to this conceptual potential in practice. On the whole, as with much research on TCs, claims rely largely on normative conviction, conceptual potential or research from a small subsample of cases (see Brahm 2007). There are no cross-national or comparative studies on truth commissions and their relationships with education.

In this paper, we seek to address this problem, undertaking a content analysis of twenty truth commission reports spanning 1980-2015. Our aims are to: 1) identify the various ways in which TCs have engaged with education, 2) explore if and how this engagement has changed over time, and 3) consider possibilities for meeting the TC

intention of change in the future informed by truth about the past through their work with education.

The findings from this study present much to celebrate, including a trend towards more engagement with education by TCs over time, as well as a proliferation in the ways that TCs have worked with education. We find that decade upon decade since the 1980s TCs are doing more work on, and with, formal and non-formal education. We suggest that changes in truth commission mandates, the proliferation of truth commissions globally, and the transnational exchange of best practices across commissions, have contributed to these increased engagements with the educational sector. As work with education has become established as part of what truth commissions do, we see TCs beginning to ‘tell the truth about education,’ including in their work investigations into the ways in which education was affected by, and may have contributed towards, conflict.

However, our analysis also uncovers critical limitations in the ways that TCs work with education. First, we find that work *on* education is much more frequent than work *with* education. That is, educational actors are expected to implement recommendations made by TCs, rather than contribute to authoring these recommendations, be partners in the TC process, or strategically plan across sectors. Second, our analysis illustrates that ‘forward-looking’ elements of education are increasingly mobilized by truth commissions, such as recommendations to introduce new subjects or content (particularly human rights and peace education) following periods of conflict and rights violations. We find a disjuncture between the (backward looking) truth telling work that TCs do around education and the (forward looking) recommendations that they make for educational change. In other words, despite work to tell the truth about

education and its role in the generation of conflict, TCs tend not to call for transformational changes within the education sector.

Truth commissions, education and positive peace

Transformational change is essential for fostering positive peace (Galtung 1969), a peace requiring not just the absence of direct, physical violence, but also the elimination of structural violence, cultural violence and other forms of repression and exclusion. Conceptual work has shown that education and transitional justice might work together and reinforce one another in ways that contribute to transformation (e.g. Cole and Murphy 2009; Davies 2007; Novelli et al. 2015; Paulson 2009). Empirical work has begun to explore this relationship in practice in particular transitional justice contexts (Bellino 2016, 2017; Murphy 2017; Paulson 2017), and several contributions to this special issue add to this growing literature. This body of research points to challenges in translating the conceptual potential for peacebuilding into educational practice, highlighting pitfalls such as the frequent politicization of educational reforms, while also pointing to positive instances where transitional justice and education initiatives are well aligned, contributing towards positive change in education and/or in wider society. We frame our cross-national analysis of truth commissions and education as one that explores this potential in practice. We therefore critically consider the findings from our analysis to understand if and how the TC practice that we uncover is working with education to make a contribution towards positive peace.

Truth-seeking has emerged as a vital mechanism of transitional justice and an important element of liberal peacebuilding, so that the establishment of a truth commission as an element of the transitional justice process has come to be regarded as a

global “norm” (Kelsall 2005, 362). Truth commissions are convened as temporary bodies with the aim of investigating past crimes in order to document the causes and consequences of armed conflict or a period of human rights abuses (Hayner 2011). They play a distinct role as a transitional justice mechanism. Unlike trials, they do not have prosecutorial power and for many years the ‘truth versus justice’ debate dominated in transitional justice and human rights circles (e.g. Hayner 2011; Lekha Sriram and Pillay 2010; Mendez 1997). More recent arguments dismantle this tension, arguing that “in a holistic approach to transitional justice, the recovery of truth serves as both a cornerstone of justice and a triggering device for legal justice, reparations, and institutional reforms” (Ames Cobián and Reátegui 2007, 148).

Part of a TC’s role is to make recommendations based on their investigation into past violence and injustice that will prevent such abuses from reoccurring. In this sense, reports created by truth commissions capture a vision of the just future and the particular transformations required to move society toward sustainable (positive) peace, stability, and (often) democratization. There are good reasons to expect that TCs would, or should, engage intentionally with the formal educational sector. The nature of armed conflict has shifted in recent decades, targeting greater numbers of civilians, and encompassing attacks on humanitarian spaces and sites of ideological struggle such as schools (EFA GMR 2011). Unequal distribution of educational opportunities has led to theories of “horizontal inequality” (Stewart 2002) between groups provoking and exacerbating conflict. There is also growing awareness of “subtractive schooling,” what Valenzuela (1999, 20) describes as “subtractive assimilationist policies and practices that are designed to divest ... [minoritized] students of their culture and language.” Additionally,

cross-national case studies point to a number of ways that formal instruction in schools has contributed to conflict dynamics, for example propagating divisive curriculum or sparking long-standing grievances between identity groups (e.g. Davies 2004; Tawil and Harley 2004). In light of these trends, we might expect that truth commissions would extend their documentation of past rights abuses to educational contexts, actors, and policies, acknowledging the role of educational opportunity structures, formal and hidden curricula, and “subtractive” and exclusionary practices in conflict.

As previously stated, TCs are unique in that they are not solely backward-looking but also distinctly future-oriented, or forward-looking, encouraging public acknowledgement of past conflict in order to transform and reconcile the present and future. In recent years, substantive links between education, conflict, and prospects for sustainable peacebuilding have been developed (e.g., Novelli, Lopes Cardozo, & Smith 2015). Although education is no longer regarded as an inherently protective or neutral institution, scholars and practitioners remain committed to strengthening the potential for schools to foster reconciliation and violence prevention in the aftermath of conflict (Bellino & Williams 2017; Buckland 2005; Mundy & Dryden-Peterson 2011; Paulson 2011a). A number of studies argue for the potential for schools to instill a shared sense of identity (Tawil & Harley 2004), deepen awareness of and respect for human rights (Tibbitts & Fernekes 2010), and teach conflict-resolution and peacebuilding skills (Bickmore 2004). These studies have also established that educational reconstruction demands simultaneous attention to structural and curricular elements, arguing that peace education implemented within unchanged, inequitable structures risks preserving and reproducing conflict legacies, thus undermining transitional justice goals (Bellino 2016;

Cremin 2015; Hammett & Staeheli 2013). Yet despite these more complex understandings of education, peace, and conflict interactions, there remains a lack of “sensitivity of reforms and programs to the legacies of past injustices in both the education sector and the public culture of a country” (Ramírez-Barat & Duthie 2017, 11). These forward and backward-looking demands placed on the educational sector speak to what Lynn Davies (2017, in this Special Issue) aptly calls a “two-way gaze.” In this study, we draw on document-based evidence from truth commissions’ final reports to theorize the dual need for education to respond to past harms and injustices committed through education, as well as to proactively embrace the transformative potential of education in order to contribute to peace in the present and future.

Methods

This paper presents the findings of a targeted content analysis of published final reports of truth commissions since 1980. Hayner’s (2011) latest count of truth commissions around the world puts the total figure at forty, including five commissions that were underway at the moment she was writing. Since then, a further TC has been proposed in Colombia. There are a growing range of initiatives devoted to truth-seeking, beyond the conventional TC. For our sample, we rely on Hayner’s inclusion criteria, limiting our sample to those that meet her definition of a truth commission as a body that:

(1) is focused on the past, rather than ongoing events; (2) investigates a pattern of events that took place over a period of time; (3) engages directly and broadly with the affected population, gathering information on their experiences; (4) is a temporary body, with the aim of concluding with a final report; and (5) is officially authorized or empowered by the state under review. (11-12).

We have attempted to include as many of these forty plus reports as possible in our analysis, in the hopes of drawing on the most representative dataset. The truth commissions not included in our analysis are those that did not publish or release a final report, those where the final report is not publicly accessible in English, French, or Spanish, those that were ongoing at the time of analysis, and those whose final reports we could not locate.¹ In total, we analysed twenty truth commission reports (see Table 1).

INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE.

Using final reports as the data for our analysis introduces limitations to our study, particularly as this source cannot shed light on the impact of what is in its pages either on educational transformation or on wider processes of social change. Indeed, a clear finding of research into the implementation of TC recommendations towards education specifically (e.g. Paulson 2011b, 2007) and towards government more broadly (e.g. Mendelhoff 2004; Hayner 2011) is that these are often un- or under-implemented. While we acknowledge the need for further qualitative and cross-national comparative research into the impact of TCs in and on education, we believe that there is value in offering a starting point for the cross-national conversation by exploring what is recorded within the pages of TC final reports.

¹ TCs excluded because they did not publish or release full final reports include: Bolivia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ecuador (a first TC held in 1996-97), Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Nigeria, Philippines, Zimbabwe; TCs excluded because they were unavailable in English, French or Spanish include: Germany; TCs excluded because we could not locate copies of the final report include: e.g. Ecuador, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Uruguay's 1985 TC; TCs excluded because they were ongoing or incomplete at the time of analysis: Mauritius, Solomon Islands, Togo. We excluded the TC conducted in Greensboro, North Carolina, USA, which Hayner includes in her list of 40 TCs, but which was not officially authorised or empowered by the state, and the Uganda 1974 TC because our time period is limited to 1980-2015. We located final reports on publicly accessible databases such as those archived by the United States Institute of Peace and International Center for Transitional Justice, on official truth commission websites, through internet searches and through our professional networks.

Truth commission reports are lengthy and unwieldy documents. They consist of several volumes and span thousands of pages in total. Formats vary, but generally, final reports lay out the mandate, composition and methods of the commission, before detailing at length its findings into human rights abuses committed over the period investigated, along with their causes and consequences. Final reports often conclude with a series of recommendations based upon their findings and analysis. These recommendations are traditionally oriented toward both root causes and consequences of conflict, suggesting actions and reforms that will ensure the non-repetition of human rights violations, while also aiming to reconcile short and long-term outcomes of these abuses.

Because of their length, exhaustive content analysis of final reports was not possible. Instead we relied on tables of contents to alert us to sections most relevant to education, such as origins of conflict, historical analyses of structural inequality, in all cases the conclusions and recommendations sections, and in those cases where they existed, the specific sections on education, children, social sectors, and so forth. For final reports published in searchable electronic formats, we also utilized targeted keyword searches (e.g., education, teacher, children, youth, school, and variants on the root stems of these words).

Working with the sections of the final reports identified through the above strategies, we undertook two rounds of coding. In the first round, we generated a list of emic codes for engagements with education as these emerged from the final reports, adhering to the language used in reports and doing little to consolidate, condense, or link codes. All twenty final reports were included in this process of initial “open” coding. We

then expanded and collapsed codes, drawing on transitional justice and education literature to etically inform code distinctions, a complex step we further describe below. We compiled quotations from truth commission reports to evidence and compare instances where we coded for particular interactions with education. Returning to final reports, we then recoded for engagements with education using this set of more “focused” codes, analysing reports independently in order to ensure reliability. The purpose of this iterative analytic process was to identify the nature and distribution of truth commission engagements with education across our sample, rather than to measure the frequency or repetition of their occurrence within individual country reports. That is, once we established the full set of descriptive codes, we tallied the types of distinct engagements with education displayed by each commission report, enabling us to assess which truth commissions engaged with education in what ways. Table 2, below, presents the thirteen codes we arrived at, each of which represents a distinct type of TC engagement with education that emerged from our analysis. It provides the name of the code, which we use throughout the remainder of the paper, a brief description, and some examples of the textual data that we characterized as illustrative of the code.

INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE.

The main difficulty we faced in analysis was defining and delineating meaningful boundaries between codes in order to capture the range of educational engagements documented in these reports. In making these distinctions, our knowledge of cross-national trends and challenges in education and transitional justice has been essential. For instance, a recommendation to teach about the history of recent conflict could be coded as a recommendation for teaching “new content.” However, teaching about past conflict

has been recognized as a distinct challenge for educational policymakers, educators, students, and communities (Bellino 2017; Cole & Murphy 2009; Freedman, Weinstein, Murphy, & Longman 2008; Murphy & Gallagher 2009; Paulson 2015). For these reasons, we felt it was important to account for teaching histories of conflict as a discrete educational engagement, separate from other calls for new curricular content, such as human rights education.

We also struggled to account for the level of significance that commission reports assigned to a type of educational engagement, and the depth with which they documented or made recommendations to take action in response to these educational dimensions. In other words, we asked how high should we set the bar in deciding whether to code a brief mention of schools as engagement with education, and how to distinguish between shallow and more in-depth acknowledgements of education's role in shaping conflict dynamics, and its potential contributions to post-conflict reconstruction efforts? For example, consider the following excerpt from the South African TRC's final report.

“The Commission recommends that government accelerate the closing of the intolerable gap between the advantaged and disadvantaged in our society by, inter alia, giving even more urgent attention to the transformation of education, the provision of shelter, access to clean water and health services and the creation of job opportunities” (TRC of South Africa, Volume 5, 308).

Does this passing mention qualify as a recommendation for reforming the educational sector? Ultimately, we decided that this passage did not display sufficient attention to warrant the code for sector-wide reform, instead opting to set a higher bar for an engagement with education by coding instances where the mention of education is specific (i.e., education is dealt with as a topic in its own right) and detailed (e.g., for

education sector reform, identification of problematic areas of education to be changed or suggestions for required reforms). Elsewhere in the South African TRC, we found ample evidence of more specific and detailed acknowledgements of the role that a segregated and unequal education system played in fomenting racial division and grave human rights abuses, justifying its coding against other forms of engagement with education. However, we did not find a clear set of recommendations for sector-wide reform in this report.

We do not present these codes as a definitive list of the ways in which truth commissions have engaged with education. Summative content analysis is ultimately a subjective process. We have tried to be systematic and transparent in our method and to draw on our previous qualitative work describing TC engagements with education in particular contexts (e.g. Bellino 2016; Paulson 2006 2011b, 2017) to shape our codes. Nonetheless, others may have made different definitional and descriptive decisions and constructed a different set of codes. We also wish to stress that these codes are descriptive of what is present in truth commission final reports and not prescriptive of the ways in which truth commission might or ought to engage with education. Indeed, in subsequent sections, we consider some of the critical limitations of these forms of engagement with education and imagine ways in which these relationships might be extended in order to contribute more fully to transitional justice and sustainable, positive peace in conflict-affected contexts.

Findings

In this section, we present the trends and patterns that have emerged from our analysis of truth commission final reports. We begin with descriptive findings about the ways that various TCs have engaged with formal and non-formal education, before

examining these trends over time. We then discuss the ways that cross-national patterns across TC reports point to education's forward-looking potential, often at the expense of historical investigation into the role that education has played in conflict and its root causes. We also demonstrate that TCs across these various contexts tend to recommend making reforms *on* education more consistently than envisioning reforms taking place *with* the voice and participation of educators and educational policymakers.

Diversity across TCs

There is considerable variation in the nature and degree to which individual TCs have engaged with education. Figure 1 below shows how many of the possible thirteen types of engagement with education each of the twenty TCs in our sample displayed. As the table shows, all of the TCs included some form of engagement with education. The extent of this engagement varies from low, with five TCs including only two types of engagement with education (Uganda, Haiti, El Salvador, Chad and Uruguay), to high, with the TCs of Canada and Peru each engaging with education in eleven ways. Looking across our sample, we find TCs that fall into two categories: 1) those that have had a fairly substantial engagement with education (and are therefore coded with at least six of the thirteen possible engagements with education), including: Guatemala, South Africa, Peru, Sierra Leone, Timor Leste, Liberia, Paraguay, Kenya and Canada, and 2) those that have had minimal engagement with education (are therefore coded with between two and four engagements with education): Argentina, Uganda, Chile, Haiti, El Salvador, Chad, Morocco, Ghana, South Korea, Uruguay, and Panama. (For more detail on the nature of these engagements within country contexts, refer to Table 3 in the appendix).

INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE: NUMBER OF ENGAGEMENTS BY TRUTH COMMISSION

TCs' engagement with education increases over time

While highlighting variation between individual TCs, Figure 1 also indicates an increased engagement with education over time. This trend is more clearly illustrated in Figure 2, which presents TCs' total engagements with education by decade, as well as the number of TCs in our sample by decade. In the 1990s and 2000s, we see both the proliferation of truth commissions, as well as increasing TC engagements with education. Early truth commissions of the 1980s engaged minimally with the education sector (three engagements in Argentina, two in Uganda), while in the 1990s, the TCs of Guatemala and South Africa engaged substantially with education (six and seven respectively), pulling up overall engagements in this decade despite the fact that TCs in Chile, Haiti, El Salvador and Chad continued to engage minimally (four engagements in the case of Chile, two in Haiti, El Salvador and Chad). In the 2000s, the average number of engagements with education was six, and the variation between levels of TC engagement was less pronounced than in the 1990s. The two 2010s TCs included in the sample engaged thoroughly with education, with the Canadian TC engaging in eleven ways and the Kenyan TC in eight ways. Although the current decade has the fewest TCs thus far², the extent of engagements with education already exceeds counts in the 1980s and nears that found in the 1990s.

INSERT FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE: NUMBER OF TRUTH COMMISSIONS AND ENGAGEMENTS WITH EDUCATION OVER TIME

² TCs are currently ongoing or have concluded work since 2015 in Mauritius, Solomon Islands and Togo. A TC is also proposed as part of Colombia's current peace process.

These patterns illustrate a decade upon decade increase in the number of TCs up until the end of the 2000s. We also see engagements with education accelerating over time.

Indeed, the growth of engagements with education over the period as a whole is more pronounced than the proliferation of truth commissions themselves. These data suggest that as truth commissions have become established as a post-conflict norm, so too has education become established as a dimension of TCs' work, and, indeed, a dimension of their work that is growing in substance.

Patterns in TC engagement with education

In an effort to examine educational engagements by TCs over time and across transitional justice contexts, we categorized the range of distinct engagements into five broader types of actions. These actions encompass efforts to work *on* and *with* the education sector. Figure 3 below shows the distribution of the thirteen types of educational engagements we identified across TCs into these five categories, which are to:

1. Make **instrumental** use of education to raise awareness about a TC and its work
2. Build a **relationship** with education actors and/or the education sector in recognition of shared aims and objectives and to further collaboration.
3. **Investigate** education, its role in conflict, and the impact of conflict on education as part of the work of the TC.
4. **Recommend** changes to the education sector or to education as a result of the TC's work and investigations.
5. **Create** resources aimed at children and schools.

INSERT FIGURE 3 ABOUT HERE: FREQUENCY OF DIFFERENT TYPES OF ENGAGEMENT WITH EDUCATION

We use these actions and the wider set of thirteen engagements to draw out three patterns of TC engagements with education. First, TCs tend to act *on*, rather than *with*, education. Second, TCs are increasingly working to 'tell the truth about education,' exploring not

just how education was affected by conflict, but also the ways in which educational contexts, curricula, and conditions may have contributed towards conflict or been complicit in conflict dynamics. Third, the most frequent educational engagement of TCs is to recommend educational content. Despite their backwards looking work to tell the truth about education, TCs more often recommend forward looking (peace and human rights education) content than backward looking content focused on learning about and understanding conflict. We present these findings in more detail below, before turning the wider implications of our analysis.

Acting on versus acting with education

TCs approach education as something to be acted upon (and changed) rather than as a key partner with whom to work. This is demonstrated by the small number of TCs coded against engagements in the relationships category. The TCs of Peru and Canada were the only ones to include members of staff specifically tasked with working on issues related to education; only four TCs (Canada, Paraguay, Peru, and Sierra Leone) described developing working relationships with educational authorities; and only four (Sierra Leone, Timor Leste, Liberia and Kenya) included the participation of children in their work. For the majority of TCs in our sample, it appears that education actors were not important stakeholders in the TC process, despite the fact that investigating education in some way and making recommendations towards the educational sector were popular TC activities.

TCs are of course bodies with finite resources and big jobs – they make recommendations towards a number of sectors without forging close working relationships with them or engaging them as partners in their work. Arguably, however,

the conceptual overlap between aims and objectives of education and transitional justice is greater than with other sectors, justifying the development of strong working relationships where possible. Case study research demonstrates missed opportunities to implement TC recommendations due to education actors being uninvolved in and unaware of TC's work (e.g. Bellino 2017; Paulson 2006).

Looking backward: Investigating, exploring, and documenting the 'truth' about education

TCs are mandated to look backwards, in order to uncover the truth about human rights violations over a given period. Three quarters of the TCs in our sample turned their backwards gaze to education and several did so in multiple ways. Eleven TCs held investigations into human rights violations committed against education actors (e.g., students, teachers, university students and staff, teaching union members) and that took place within educational spaces (e.g., attacks on schools and universities). For example, there are references throughout El Salvador's TC to the disappearances and murders of university students and teachers (Commission on the Truth for El Salvador 1993).

Argentina's TC report details the routine kidnappings, detentions, torture, and disappearances of school children and university students, estimating that 21% of victims were students, while 5.7% were teachers (National Commission on the Disappearance of Persons 1985).

Nine TCs explored what Bush and Salterelli (2000) coined the "negative face of education," exploring the ways in which the education sector contributed towards conflict dynamics. The Canadian TC is worth highlighting here as its focus was entirely on the residential school experience of Aboriginal Canadians, from its origins in the European

colonization of Canada through to the year 2000, documenting in enormous detail an education project that separated families, sought to eliminate indigenous cultures, and contributed to the ongoing marginalization of indigenous people in Canada (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada 2015). In other TCs, education was one sector investigated alongside others in order to identify and understand causes and contributing factors of conflict. For instance, the Peruvian TC's final report includes a chapter on "the education sector and the teaching profession" in which educational inequalities, discrimination in education, and the radicalization of portions of leading teachers unions by Shining Path militants are identified as factors that contributed towards conflict (Comision de la Verdad y Reconciliacion 2003, Tomo III, 551). In a discussion of contributory factors within a chapter on the historical context of conflict, Ghana's TC included a discussion of "a conscious policy not to encourage literacy... on account of the need to preserve the North as a reservoir of cheap and unskilled labour" (National Reconciliation Commission, 2005, Volume 3, 8).

A final way in which TCs looked backwards towards education was through public hearings on the topic. Public hearings were popularized by the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission and have since been adopted as an approach by many TCs. In addition to including testimony from victims and survivors of conflict and/or from perpetrators of crimes, hearings can focus on a particular sector and include reflections from a range of actors including victims and survivors affected by injustice in a particular area. In four cases (Canada, Liberia, Paraguay and Peru), TCs held public hearings focused on education, enabling a public forum for uncovering the ways that education was implicated in conflict, as well as the impacts of conflict upon it.

Interestingly, the fact that most TCs in the sample included some form of backwards gaze towards education in conflict did not necessarily result in using the findings of these exercises to make targeted recommendations for reforms within the educational sector. In total, eight TCs made recommendations for education sector reform. In Sierra Leone, for example, the TC called for education to be made free and accessible (including through the provision of scholarships for girls to attend secondary schooling in particular regions), for the abolition of corporal punishment, for the reduction of corruption, and for the end of discriminatory practices (such as expelling girls who become pregnant) (Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission 2004). The TCs in Peru (Truth and Reconciliation Commission 2003) and Guatemala (Historical Clarification Commission 1999) suggested that culturally and linguistically relevant education such as bilingual and intercultural education would better serve indigenous populations whose social, political, and cultural rights had been systematically violated. In Liberia (Truth and Reconciliation Commission 2009) and Timor Leste (Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation 2005), TCs called for expanded educational opportunities for citizens, such as vocational skills training.

Of the eight TCs who made recommendations for educational reform, six cases (Canada, Kenya, Liberia, Peru, Sierra Leone, Timor Leste) had also investigated education's role in conflict. This seems a sensible pattern of work – to first investigate how education has contributed towards conflict and its causes, and then to make recommendations for changes to education based on those findings. However, not all TCs that investigated education's negative face followed this pattern. The TCs of South Africa, Ghana, and Panama investigated the role of education in conflict but did not make

recommendations for sectoral reform; and the TCs of Guatemala and Morocco made recommendations for sectoral reform without conducting investigations into the potential role of education in conflict.

In sum, there seems to be a willingness by a number of TCs to investigate crimes that take place in educational spaces, as well as cases where rights violations systematically target educational actors, thus exploring how education, educators and students were affected by conflict. Likewise, many TCs investigate the ways in which education might have contributed towards or been complicit in conflict. However, we find less of a commitment to doing this work publicly by including educational stakeholders in the performative work of TCs and encouraging a wide ranging societal reflection, participation, and dialogue about education's role in conflict via a public hearing. And, a quarter of the TCs in our sample did not turn their backwards gaze to education at all (Uganda, Haiti, Chad, Morocco and Uruguay), a missed opportunity to 'tell the truth' about education within the wider truth telling project.

Looking forward or looking backward? Recommendations for educational content

The most popular TC engagements were around recommendations for educational content – sixteen TCs called for non-formal education programmes (taking place outside of schools) and fifteen recommended the development of new content or subject areas within formal education. Recommendations for non-formal education tended to concentrate on calls for human rights education, for instance, Chile's TC recommended human rights education for members of the military, suggesting that this be implemented in military training colleges. Some TCs extended calls for non-formal education beyond human rights education, for instance recommending adult literacy and sex education

programmes in Liberia (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2009), and advocating for “investment in culturally appropriate parenting programs for Aboriginal families” in Canada (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015, p. 144). In some reports, these calls were directed towards the general population, whereas in other cases they targeted particular sectors (often security and/or justice) implicated in directly committing or failing to prevent human rights violations. In common, however, was an apparent assumption by TCs that the audience for non-formal educational initiatives was an adult one, presumably since children and young people would be reached through the second most frequent of TC recommendations, the call for new subject areas or content in schools. Given research that acknowledges the powerful ways in which young people learn about conflict and peace outside of school (e.g. Hart 2011; Sanchez-Meertens 2014; Bellino 2015, 2017), it is perhaps limiting of TCs to conceptualise their engagement with young people as only through school-based content and to target recommendations for non-formal efforts predominantly towards adult populations.

Content recommendations directed towards children and young people via the formal sector likewise regularly called for human rights education, as well as for peace education, civics education, or values education. The Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation in Timor Leste also recommended educational content around food security, disaster preparedness, environment, health, cultural self-determination and gender, suggesting that for this TC any number of social problems might be remedied through formal instruction in schools (Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation 2005). TC recommendations for new curricular content were generally brief, listing only the areas around which new content or subjects should be developed.

Detail was usually not given about how and by whom such content or guidelines should be developed, nor whether educators might be trained in implementing new content.

Peace and human rights curricula have been criticized for being universalized and decontextualized (Cremin 2015; Horner 2013). Often peace education espouses a forward looking approach promising future peace that is not grounded in an understanding of the past and its legacies in the present. In other words, there is no guarantee that a peace or human rights curriculum developed as a result of a TC recommendation would include discussion of the human rights abuses that prompted the TC in the first place. Indeed, these curricula often are implemented as abstract principles to be memorized, leaving students to make connections on their own (e.g., Bellino 2014). This raises concern about the fact the recommendations for formal and non-formal education in human rights and peace education is the most frequent educational engagement of TCs – bodies that are after all mandated to investigate the past and to uncover particular, contextual truths. This concern is confounded by the fact that not all TCs – indeed, not even a majority of TCs – made recommendations to teach about the conflict that they investigated.

Seven TCs made recommendations to teach about conflict and seven produced educational resources based on their work (of these, five – Timor Leste, Liberia, Paraguay, Kenya, Canada – did both). Just over half of the TCs in our sample (eleven) did not concern themselves with education explicitly about the conflict or period of human rights violations they explored. Table 3 provides more nuance to this tension between the forward looking (formal and non-formal human rights and peace education) and the backward looking (history of conflict and resources) ways that TCs engage with educational content. It shows how recommendations for forward looking content have

consistently been part of TCs' work, even when (as was the case in the 1980s and with many TCs in the 1990s) engagement with education was minimal. As overall engagements with education became more substantial (as was the case with some 1990s TCs, most 2000 TCs and all 2010 TCs), so too did recommendations for backward looking content become more common. Teaching about recent violent conflict is challenging and contentious (e.g. Bellino 2016, Bekerman and Zembylas 2013; Paulson 2015) but is also important as an educational contribution towards positive peace, particularly because it can challenge "subtractive schooling" practices (Valenzuela 1999) by recognizing and acknowledging experiences of injustice previously excluded from curriculum. Truth commissions themselves can be seen as resources for this teaching and can actively encourage it through their engagement with education. We argue that it is important (arguably more so than recommending general, forward looking content) that they do so.

INSERT TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE.

Conceptualizing education as a key element of TCs' work

As we have suggested above, the fact that overall TC engagement with education increased over the decades covered in this project means that education is becoming a more consistent dimension of truth commission work. This can be explained in a number of ways. First, there is an argument in the transitional justice literature that truth commission mandates should widen. Early TCs, like the well-known ones in Argentina and Chile, had mandates focused particularly on uncovering the truth about violations of civil and political rights (particularly, in these cases, detentions, disappearances, torture, and killing). Scholars have argued that to maximise their contribution to positive peace,

truth commissions should focus on social, cultural and economic rights violations as well as violations of civil and political rights in order to uncover both the wider causes of periods of human rights violations and their full impact on societies (e.g., Laplante 2008). South Africa's famous TC made the controversial decision to limit its mandate to gross violations of human rights (murder, disappearances, detention, torture and assaults) but provoked a wider societal exploration of the legacies of apartheid and contributed to the scholarly argument that TCs, and transitional justice institutions in general, must adopt wider mandates and consider fully the causes and consequences of massive human rights violations and violent conflict. This call has not been wholeheartedly taken up, as TC mandates tend to remain focused on clarifying violations of civil and political rights; however, they do increasingly also call for investigation into the root causes of conflict (Laplante 2008), which opens space for exploring areas like education.

Second, transitional justice in general and truth commissions in particular operate at the level of "global models" and "universal templates." Indeed, their prominence has been celebrated by institutional theorists as part of a growing "justice cascade" that is institutionalizing human rights around the world (Lutz and Skikkink 2001). TCs draw on the experiences of previous commissions in their design and are often shaped by "foreign generalists" interested in sharing "best practice" (Clark and Palmer 2012, 7). An influential TC expert and consultant has advised on the development of a number of the TCs included in our sample; TCs have also shared commissioners, and TC staff and commissioners have had opportunities to meet and learn from one another in internationally supported workshops. These processes lead to harmonization across TCs, or even to a TC "template" (Clark and Palmer 2012, 7) and can be seen to have made a

mark on TC engagement with education. In particular, UNICEF led an international project to develop more child-friendly transitional justice practices (Parmar et al. 2010) and mobilised a network of individuals concerned with TC best practices, working at a global level as well as directly supporting TCs in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Timor Leste. Particular priorities for UNICEF work were around encouraging the involvement of children and young people in TC processes, developing sensitive processes to collect testimony from children, and supporting the development of educational materials based on TCs work, including the first “child friendly version” of a TC final report, published in Sierra Leone (Cook and Heykoop 2010).

A third, related, point is that international recognition of education and its role in both conflict and in peacebuilding has increased considerably over the period of our sample. The important role of education in peacebuilding is much more widely acknowledged today than it was in 1980. This has led to a more focused consideration of education’s relationship with other peacebuilding processes. As such, education and transitional justice has been the focus of international workshops and research projects in recent years (e.g., Ramirez-Barat and Duthie 2017). Again, these projects have mobilised global level networks concerned with TC best practice.

Finally, there appears to be a correspondence between those TCs that have engaged more fully with education and those TCs that are seen to have been the most successful. Hayner (2011) lists South Africa, Guatemala, Peru, Timor-Leste and Morocco as the five “strongest” truth commissions, accomplishing their mandates and contributing in some ways to wider processes of peacebuilding (27-44). With the exception of Morocco, we found that each of these five commissions had notable engagements with

education. South Africa and Guatemala introduced a more substantive focus on education than their predecessors or contemporaries in the 1990s, Peru's engagement with education was the most substantial of any TC until Canada's, (conducted after the publication of Hayner's work and arguably another contender for a "strong" TC). Timor-Leste also engaged substantially with education, when compared to other TCs. Of course, a substantial engagement with education does not explain the success or "strength" of these commissions. The correspondence is nonetheless worth mentioning when considering the potential for truth commissions to contribute towards positive peace, and provides some evidence to support the conceptual arguments in the literature that argue for TCs to engage with education.

Possibilities for contributing towards positive peace

Above we have seen how work at the global level, through networks of best practice, learning across TCs and the support of international agencies has contributed towards what can be seen as a positive development overall: more work on and with education by TCs, often including readiness to recognize and document education's potential contribution to conflict dynamics. However, our findings also raise questions for the degree to which this growing work with education can contribute towards positive peace. In particular, we find that TCs tend to approach education as a space for forward-looking reforms, such as the introduction of new curricular subjects and non-formal education programmes. On the whole, engagements that look directly to the past, such as investigating the role of education in conflict and rights violations, calling for educational reparations, or recommending that schools teach about recent conflict are less frequent than these forward looking, educational content-based recommendations.

This is ironic, given TC's mandates to clarify the past. It is also potentially limiting the contribution that TC work on education might make towards positive peace. Recalling that positive peace requires not just the eliminating of physical violence, but also the elimination of structural and cultural violence, it is essential to think about how education might do this. Fraser's (2008) conceptualization of justice as requiring redistribution, recognition, and representation is helpful here, as is her call (1997) for transformative remedies for injustice that restructure underlying economic, social, cultural and political frameworks that have generated injustice and violence. For truth commissions to contribute towards this kind of justice work with and in education, they need to take seriously their wider (backwards looking) contribution towards the recognition of human rights violations, their causes and their consequences for victims and for wider society. Teaching about conflict from this perspective of recognition is one clear and necessary contribution towards a positive peace. It is also one around which the contribution of TCs has been patchy.

The recommendation of reparations for victims of conflict and their families makes a potential contribution towards recognition and redistribution. Educational reparations are no exception. Recommendations for educational reparations explicitly use the realities of the past as the basis for justice in the present by seeking to compensate those (or the family members of those) whose educational experiences were interrupted, made impossible, or worsened by conflict. As such, educational reparations can represent an important contribution towards processes of addressing legacies of violence and therefore contributing towards positive peace. In total, nine TCs (Argentina, Guatemala, Chile, South Africa, Haiti, Peru, Morocco, Ghana, Paraguay) made recommendations for

some form of educational reparations. Interestingly, neither of the 2010 TCs (Canada and Kenya), both of which had substantial engagements with education, recommended educational reparations – suggesting that this type of engagement might be on the decline. This is a further indication, perhaps, of a disjuncture between TCs work to tell the truth about education as a growing part of their investigative process and TCs’ work to effect change in education. This distances TCs from the contribution they might make to processes of justice rooted in recognition, redistribution and representation and to an insistence on the transformation of the causes of injustice as necessary for the construction of peace.

Further, TCs’ work to change education without attention to conflict supports studies carried out in other post-conflict contexts, which demonstrate that the educational sector is more frequently conceived as an outcome of transitional justice than as a mechanism of the transition (Bellino 2016, 2017; Murphy 2017). In other words, we do not see TC truth telling about education leading to the wider transformation of education as an institution that may have been generative of conflict. This raises questions about the celebration of the “justice cascade” and the role of the international community in promoting TCs, transitional justice processes and liberal approaches to peacebuilding more widely. Chandra Lekha Sriram (2007) argues that as transitional justice has become a central tool of liberal peacebuilding, so too has it adopted the assumption that marketisation and democratization are the paths towards peace. There are rich avenues for further research into the degree to which TC work more generally and with education specifically is shaped by international agendas, how peace is shaped and defined within

those agendas, and the possibilities and constraints of these processes in transitional societies.

Conclusion

We see TCs working to enable justice in and through education as a condition for their work to result in a contribution towards positive peace. Guided by this vision of justice in and through education, in this paper we have tried to understand more about how TCs have engaged with education since they became a popular transitional justice tool by analyzing the final reports of 20 TCs. We have found that education is becoming an increasingly important part of TCs' work and have highlighted both positive and worrying trends within this engagement.

In conclusion, we argue that to make a contribution towards positive peace, TCs would need to seek to tell the historical truth about education—acknowledging, for instance, that a new peace education content may likely be delivered through education systems that are structurally and culturally violent (Cremin, 2015). The disjuncture when backwards looking truth telling does not inform forward looking reform is clear in the (often largely unchanged) educational experiences of children from conflict-affected communities in many of the countries included in this study. For example, rape and sexual assault in South African schools continue to impede efforts to educate young people about their human rights and ensure basic protections at school (Prinsloo, 2006). Indigenous Maya communities who negotiated for broader access to educational resources and infrastructure, greater local autonomy in schools, and intercultural bilingual education as part of Guatemala's peace process continue to travel long distances from their rural villages to attend underresourced schools and learn in a

language that carries the legacy of colonial domination (Bellino, 2017). Meanwhile, a parent living in the North Rift Valley of Kenya, a region systematically isolated and underdeveloped since colonial times, described how truth commissioners traveled to his remote village to “ask many questions” about his experiences of marginalization by the state. He centered his testimony on his children’s struggle to access basic education, one of many inequities that contributed to ethnic grievances ignited during Kenya’s post-election violence, but educational access and quality had not changed as a result of the Commission’s work.

TCs need to seek to repair and transform these truths in their further engagements with education, including through the recommendations that they make for forward-looking reforms. The implementation of peace and human rights curricula, in the absence of systemic reforms, exemplifies attention to negative peace over the commitments to positive peace through systemic transformation. Moreover, lack of attention to the particular ways that education has interacted with and generated conflict have been recognized as a critical challenge to education’s capacity to contribute towards peacebuilding. The backward gaze of truth commissions, therefore, is essential and needs to include a focus on education. Commissions’ forward gaze needs to be informed by, and directed at changing, the difficult truths about education and its relationship to conflict and human rights violations that the backward gaze uncovers. Recommending transformational changes based on these difficult truths is one way justice can be done in, with, and through education.

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